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AUTHOR Troen, Vivian; Boles, Katherine
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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined female teacher leaders' views of teacher leadership are presented in this paper, which focuses on the potential of teacher leadership for facilitating school reform. Interviews were conducted with six women teacher leaders involved in restructuring efforts--three in school/college collaboration and three in curriculum reform. Findings illustrate how the women succeeded despite the school structures in which they worked. Teacher leadership initiatives provided them with opportunities for collaboration, professional development, and affecting school change. A drawback was the loss of connectedness to former peers, which raises the question of how to redefine power and leadership in feminist terms. (Contains 35 references.) (LMI)

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Leadership from the Classroom: Women Teachers as a Key to School Reform

Paper prepared for the 1992 AERA Conference in San Francisco

by Vivian Troen
Brookline MA Public Schools/Wheelock College

Katherine Boles
Educational Research and Consulting Group

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Leadership from the Classroom: Women Teachers as a Key to School Reform

Vivian Troen, Brookline Public Schools/Wheelock College
Katherine C. Boles, Educational Research and Consulting Group

We write this chapter to bring the accumulated wisdom of six women teacher leaders to others interested in the issue of teacher leadership. We appreciate our interviewees' willingness to expose themselves to our scrutiny in order to help others who are embarking on teacher leadership in school reform. We begin with project descriptions in order to provide the necessary background for the subsequent analysis of teacher leadership.

The Teacher Leadership Projects

The projects these teacher leaders initiated were restructuring efforts and altered the school environment in some way. We have organized them into two categories: school/college collaboratives and curriculum reform efforts. The names of the projects and the teacher leaders have been changed to protect their anonymity.

School-College Collaboratives

The Highland College Experiment

Pauline Curran is an elementary school teacher in a small town. Reflecting on her years of classroom experience gave her insights into the need for improving the training of student teachers while simultaneously giving veteran teachers strategies for working with preservice teachers. She believed a collaborative approach to preservice undergraduate education could provide some solutions to these problems, and as a result, she attempted to initiate a dialogue with the student teacher supervisor at nearby Highland College. To her surprise, she was immediately rebuffed.

"I was pretty naive at the time," she says, "I thought they would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with classroom teachers in building a stronger program. I was wrong. For years and years, universities have run preservice training, and the message I

was getting was that they were not about to share their authority and control."

She tried different levels of the college hierarchy, but received no attention until, on her own volition, she sought and obtained a small grant. At that point a college faculty member became "mildly interested" and agreed to a formal meeting to discuss Pauline's ideas.

After pulling together a coalition of college supervisors, classroom teachers, and student teachers, Pauline published a handbook for cooperating teachers to use during the student teaching practicum. This handbook is now in use in many parts of her state and serves as a model for cooperation among the various constituencies of preservice training.

The success of the handbook helped other teachers in her building realize that the role of cooperating teacher needed additional clarification, and the project expanded to include more teachers in the school.

At the heart of the program is the teacher leader/on-site coordinator (initially Pauline Curran) who facilitates meetings for cooperating teachers to develop strategies to enhance the student teaching experience. A second component designed by Pauline is a seminar series for student teachers taught by classroom teachers. Seminar topics include mainstreaming of special education students, whole language strategies, and behavior management. Classroom teachers also serve as guest lecturers at college practicum courses.

Pauline went on to design the third program component, a Cooperating Teacher Study Group. The group meets during the school day while student teachers are teaching. Facilitated by a college supervisor, group discussions center around current literature concerning classroom practice and educational theory. According to Pauline, the study group has inspired teachers to use new strategies in their classrooms.

The program is now in its third year.

The O'Neill School/Sprague College Partnership

This middle school / graduate teacher education project was initiated by Maureen Agostino, a math teacher in a large urban school.

"It occurred to me that there were three components of the profession that needed attention," reports Maureen. "First, student teachers in my school were set up for failure because of the lack of understanding and communication between college instructors and classroom teachers. In addition, new teachers were giving up and leaving after only one or two years on the job. And, isolation and stagnation seemed to be the inevitable lot of those teachers who stayed in the profession. I thought all three of those areas could be attacked with a coordinated effort between the school and the college."

Maureen approached Sprague College with the idea of forming a collaboration with a twofold purpose: to bridge the gap between theory and practice for preservice teachers, and to create professional development opportunities for experienced faculty.

Like Pauline, Maureen was stunned by the college's lack of interest. "They don't take you seriously if you're a classroom teacher," she says. "After all, you don't have your doctorate and teach in college, so how could you have any worthwhile ideas about educational reform?" But Maureen wasn't finished. "I went home and screamed at the walls," says Maureen, "but they hadn't seen the last of me. I was not about to give up."

Maureen wrote grant applications, consulted with others who were involved in school/college partnerships, kept visiting the college and pushing the faculty, and finally arranged a serious meeting with college faculty that resulted in a school/college partnership. Obtaining grant money, as in Pauline's case, seemed to be the turning point. "When you show up with money in your hand, they begin to pay attention," she relates.

Now in its second year, The O'Neill School/Sprague College Partnership consists of a cluster of teachers and student interns who are at the school site for a year-long practicum. Collaborative teaching has lowered the student-teacher ration; teachers report

they feel more accountable to one another for the quality of their lessons; and children benefit from more thoughtful lesson planning.

Teachers in the collaboration serve as adjunct college faculty members, presenting at college courses, and participating in a study group on classroom-based research, taught by a college faculty member.

As part of her ongoing battle, Maureen is fighting to have teachers paid for their extra work.

The Consortium for Improved Teaching and Learning

Disquieted by the isolating nature of classroom teaching, two elementary school teachers in a suburb close to a major city began regularly to reflect on their practice. Their initial discussions centered around team teaching as a strategy to reduce classroom isolation.

Two years of planning by Tamar Vine and Bella Katz included article writing and lecturing to try out their ideas, lobbying with their principal and school system superintendent, numerous trips to call on the state commissioner of education in order to obtain funding, agitating with local colleges and universities to try and drum up interest in their plan for a school/college collaboration.

Their plan consisted of forming teaching teams with several objectives: increase the clinical aspect of preservice teacher education, provide special needs children with all remedial services within the regular classroom, offer experienced teachers an expanded role in the training of novice teachers, and provide teachers with opportunities for alternative professional options in research, curriculum development, and preservice teacher education *during the school day.*

A spate of grant writing and fund-raising initiatives resulted in several state grants, a donation from a private foundation, and some funds moved from elsewhere in the school budget.

The current, much-expanded collaborative project is now in its fifth year, and consists of two colleges and teaching teams in three urban and four suburban schools. It is accomplishing what its teacher leaders set out to do: form collegial teams, mainstream bilingual and

special needs students, bring full-time graduate interns into the classroom, and provide new professional roles for full-time teachers.

"We were lucky to have the initial support of a sympathetic principal and one college faculty member who understood what we were trying to do - and gave us encouragement," recalls Tamar. "In other areas and at other levels, we kept hitting walls of resistance. We just learned how to go through them or work around them."

Curriculum Reform Efforts

The Writing Project

Veronica Miller is a second grade teacher in an urban school. Doing research on the writing of children in her classroom, she discovered that writing could lead children into developing positive strategies of problem solving.

"It suddenly came to me that there was an opportunity to encourage children to reach higher levels of thinking than they had been capable of in the past," Veronica recalls, "and that led me to form a plan for writing a specialized curriculum for whole language teaching for kindergarten through third grade."

She had given herself a difficult assignment. First, she had to confront and overcome opposition from the school principal, who was not pleased that she had spent long hours working on her own time to develop a better curriculum. He would have preferred her to concentrate on delivering the city-wide curriculum. She implemented her new curriculum in her own classroom but she was never allowed to work with other teachers in her own school. She, therefore, went (practically undercover) to work with teachers in other buildings in her system.

Even more upsetting was the negative reaction she received from parents who said she was a "bad teacher" because their children weren't getting lots of worksheets and instead she was teaching them in "not a regular way."

"That really hurt," says Veronica. "I shed a lot of tears over that experience, but I was convinced that raising the aspirations of my

students by empowering them to gain new insights into their own creative process was something I had to do."

She disregarded the system's mandated curriculum. She wrote numbers of grants. She designed and held workshops. And she finally overcame both resistance and hostility to provide teachers (not in her own building, unfortunately) with a new curriculum that today, two years later, is also encouraging them to use classroom-based research to improve practice.

"Teachers can be encouraged to look beyond the immediacy of the moment -- to reflect on their teaching and on the children in their classes," says Veronica. "It just takes a lot more effort than you think it should."

The Mount Whitmore Project

Desperate for space in her overcrowded rural K-8 school, Theresa Fournier began looking at the accommodations in a local arts center. The building was up for sale, and Theresa devised a feasible plan to obtain the space for the school's seventh and eighth grades. Convincing the school board and the theater's board of directors was not as easy as devising the plan, and another difficult step in the process was forming a collaboration with the art teacher and the other seventh and eighth grade teachers.

With assurances that the arts facility would be obtained by the school, the newly-formed group designed a curriculum that effectively integrated the arts and computer technology into the seventh and eighth grade academic curriculum.

After a full year of exceptionally hard work, the team is still optimistic that the plan can be put into effect. However, the building has not yet been acquired and the project is in danger of collapsing because of recent political maneuverings regarding the use of the building.

The Community Outreach Project

Teacher leader Olivia Cameron developed a program that increased parent participation in the school, brought arts and foreign language into classrooms, and increased children's experiences with

"Real Work" -- working in the community using community resources as a primary learning source. Recognizing that other schools in her rural school district could benefit from the work she had done in her own school, Olivia organized a group of teachers from her school district and wrote and obtained a large state grant to expand her ideas to the three other schools in town. Olivia's goals were two-fold: to broaden the scope of community participation in the schools by creating programs and curricula that necessitated the positive involvement of the community, and to give children a sense of purpose and meaning in their learning in order to improve academic performance.

Five mini-schools were created from the earlier, more traditional three-school configuration. Children now remain in their mini-school for three or four years. "Real Work" projects are being instituted in the various schools, and increased communication between the schools and the community has been facilitated by frequent meetings organized to more actively involve parents and other community members in the life of the school.

Background of Teacher Leadership

The school reform reports of the late1980s make strong and compelling recommendations for teachers to provide leadership in restructuring the nation's schools (Carnegie, 1986; Holmes, 1986). The reports emphasize the importance of creating new roles for teachers that both recognize the centrality of classroom teaching and extend teachers' decision-making power into school-wide leadership activities.

Teacher leadership initiatives, though, run contrary to the norms of school teaching in the United States. Since the mid-nineteenth century, teaching has been accepted as woman's work, or, as Catherine Beecher called it, "woman's true profession." Woman's role was to follow, not to lead. David Tyack referred to the newly feminized schools of the nineteenth century as "pedagogical harem(s)" where many women taught and a few men directed. As Strober and Tyack report:

> From the beginning, sex segregation was part of the design of the urban graded school. ....By structuring jobs to take advantage of sex-role stereotypes about women's responsiveness to rules and male authority, and men's presumed ability to manage women, urban school boards were able to...control the curriculum, students and personnel. ...Given this purpose of tight control, women were ideal employees. With few alternative occupations and accustomed to patriarchal authority, they mostly did what their male superiors ordered. Differences of gender provided an important form of social control. (Strober and Tyack, p. 500, 1980)

Teachers work in isolation, segregated from one another in "egg-crate" classrooms (Lortie, 1975). Indeed, they function much like nineteenth-century factory workers who would have deemed it inappropriate or useless to tell the bosses how to restructure the assembly line. There has been an expectation of top-down mandates with little input from practitioners. This should come as no surprise, since teaching has traditionally been a low-status job for women in the United States.

The teacher leadership literature of the1980s and 1990s ignored the critical role that gender had played in the history of the American schoolteacher, but did challenge the top-down nature of schools.

The first phase of this literature focused on what *should* happen vis-a-vis teacher leadership. A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (Carnegie, 1986) emphasized the importance of providing leadership roles for teachers, thus restructuring the role of the teacher in the organization. Who Will Teach Our Children? (1985), the report of the California Commission on the Teaching Profession, and Devaney's "The Lead Teacher: Ways to Begin" (1987), a paper prepared for the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession for the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, projected the role these newly empowered teachers would play in America's schools. Hypothetical sketches portrayed restructured schools and classrooms where a reorganized school day and a multi-level career path for classroom teachers offered new stimulation and avenues for teachers' professional growth. The reports envisioned less rigidly

structured organizations where teachers' roles are flexible and extend beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

The second phase of the leadership reform literature made the difficult leap from report to reality by documenting what *is* happening in teacher leadership -- cataloguing the experiences of teachers in newly created teacher leader roles. Ann Lieberman, in her study of seventeen teacher leaders (1988), views teacher leadership as a means of "fashioning new ways of working with the school community." However, her study indicates that even when school districts identify teacher leaders and give them leadership positions in schools, the work of teacher leadership is not easy. Lieberman describes the number of organizational and administrative skills these teacher leaders had to learn, and she states that they learned "without exception...about the school culture as if it were a new experience for them" (p. 150). They discovered how hard it was to develop trust among teachers and "they were confronted with the egalitarian ethic held by most teachers -- the belief that teachers are all alike" (p. 151). Patricia Wasley's (1990) study of three teacher leaders supports Lieberman's findings and provides a more in-depth understanding of the dilemmas and demands confronting teacher leaders.

Though the teachers Wasley studies continue to teach at the same time as they provide leadership in their schools, a large number of teacher leaders have left classroom teaching to assume their leadership positions. Those who have continued teaching often assume positions such as mentor or peer coach, roles that support collegiality and collaboration, but do not provide "direction or determination" (Cooper, 1988 p. 51). In addition, most of the teacher leadership positions have been determined not by teachers, but by "higher-ups" in the school organization.

Little attention has been paid in the reform literature, however, to teachers who have *created* their own leadership roles and have exerted that leadership *without* leaving classroom teaching. Maintaining their roles as classroom teachers, while assuming leadership roles beyond their traditional position in the school hierarchy, these teachers have facilitated change in their

schools. Ignoring this critical group of teachers interested in leadership for school reform limits the definition of teacher leader and overlooks a possible means to professionalize the role of teacher.

The purpose of teacher leadership is to alter the hierarchical nature of schools, allowing practicing teachers to reform their own work and the work of other teachers.

The goal of this chapter is to force the discussion of teacher leadership to address how teachers can be leaders and continue to be classroom teachers. It also adds the dimension of gender.

Sample

For the purpose of this research, and because we are looking for new models of teacher leadership, each of the teacher leaders we chose to study:

- teaches children during at least part of the school day;
- exerts influence beyond her isolated classroom, playing an important role in the larger arena of school and school district;
- has initiated a project to improve the school as well as to "redesign [her] work and augment [her] formal authority..." (Johnson, 1990, p. 348).

Such a sample acknowledges the centrality of care-giving and nurturing to the definition of teacher, while broadening the definition of teacher leader to include curriculum development, research, and policymaking beyond the classroom's four walls.

An outstanding teacher, admired by parents and colleagues alike, did not match our definition of a teacher leader unless her influence extended beyond her own classroom. Teacher leaders could not be "former teachers," such as those described in Lieberman's study. Thus, a full-time staff developer, though valued by colleagues, did not qualify for our study.

Nor were we looking for examples of the "empowered teacher" (the teacher who has been appointed to an existing or newly-created leadership position). Myrna Cooper, in her article "Whose Culture is it, Anyway?" defines empowerment as

> derived power....the licensing by others...to act somewhat free of direction in specified areas of performance. Empowerment is less than power. To be a colleague, a helper, a 'developer' does not a leader mean. (p.50)

In our sample, authority was not *given* to the teachers and none of the teachers had the advantage of positional power and established leadership roles. They had exerted their leadership in entrepreneurial ways beyond defined boundaries. and their projects involved school restructuring, college collaborations, parent/community outreach, and curriculum reform/ research.

We restricted our sample to women teacher leaders. The vast majority of schoolteachers are women, and it would be naive not to acknowledge the importance of gender in any study of teacher leadership. We chose to interview elementary teachers only, due to the preponderance of women at that level, and because our own long experience as teachers in elementary schools made us more cognizant of the issues confronting elementary teachers. We selected six women teacher leaders from urban, suburban and rural settings ranging in age from their late 30s to early 60s, with between 15 and 25 years of teaching experience; five are white, one is African-American; five are married, one is single.

These teacher leaders were recommended to us by other teachers, school administrators, central office administrators, or college faculty members. Each was recognized by all four of the above constituencies as a teacher leader who had influenced other teachers. The teachers were interviewed at length in a semi-structured interview, using the attached interview guide. Subsequent personal conversations with the subjects and their colleagues rounded out our data.

Common Characteristics of Teacher Leaders

Each teacher leader was passionate about the project she had initiated and confident of its importance to children and teachers. She had a clear vision for school reform, and, above all, each of these teacher leaders was persevering, willing to promote her vision until it became a reality. Each was undaunted by bureaucratic constraints,

unafraid to tackle the system that didn't meet the needs of the children she taught. As one teacher commented, "Being willing to take a dive, I think, is what's different about me. "

The teachers were all in mid-career with over 15 years classroom teaching experience. This phenomenon is consistent with Erikson's theory regarding adult development -- that is, during middle adulthood, achievement and recognition become central developmental objectives. From Erikson's point of view, it would not be an accident that self-initiated teacher leaders tended to be between 40 and 60 years of age (Erikson, 1950). The teachers in our study had been teaching and nurturing children for many years; now they wanted to "'jump outside' the frames and systems authorities provide and create their own frame" (Belenky et al, 1986). The experience of these women is consistent with a higher level "way of knowing" described by Belenky et al in Women's Ways of Knowing; these teachers succeeded in effectively *integrating* knowledge that they felt intuitively was personally important with knowledge they had learned from others" (P.134).

Our sample of teacher leaders, deeply committed to classroom teaching, were regarded as excellent teachers by colleagues, administrators and parents. One had been named state-wide "Teacher of the Year." Another had, over the course of her career, been awarded both state and national fellowships. All demonstrated their enthusiasm for learning by attending numerous professional conferences, regularly taking and teaching workshops and college courses, and pursuing advanced degrees.

Overview of the Findings

This section examines how teachers define teacher leadership, and highlights teachers' motivations for asserting leadership, the collaborations that sustained these teachers and the barriers that confronted them. Teacher leadership as a vehicle for professional development, the importance of collaboration in women's leadership efforts, and the concept of power in teacher leadership round out the study. All this is set in a feminist context and highlights the potential of teacher leadership as a source of school reform.

Teacher Leadership Defined

As teachers defined teacher leadership a common theme emerged: the importance of currently practicing teachers acting as catalysts for other teachers' learning. The interviewees expressed this notion in a number of ways.

> Teacher leadership is classroom teachers motivating other teachers to create a new attitude in a school, an attitude that respects teacher learning. I like to think my role as teacher leader is to encourage teachers to pursue professional development.

> Teacher leadership is a group of classroom teachers banding together to provide a quality education for kids. It's thinking with others who work directly with kids about issues that concern these kids.

These quotes highlight the importance of relationships to these teacher leaders. This should come as no surprise, given the findings of Jean Baker Miller, Carol Gilligan and others. Gilligan (1982) suggests that women's sense of self and of morality revolves around issues of responsibility for, care of, and inclusion of other people. It was clear that these teachers felt the same.

One teacher leader we interviewed synthesized what was implicit in the other quotes, when she observed, "I believe teacher leadership is all about conversations and relationships. I like to think of myself as a facilitator for teachers to follow their own interests and desires."

The definition -- being a catalyst for teacher learning -- was broadened by some teachers to include taking responsibility for restructuring efforts. One project leader contended,

> The only way schools will improve is through *inside-out* change. Practicing teachers must change the structure of schools, whether it's the ill-designed 40-minute period or the competitive isolation inherent in most schools.

Motivation

Dissatisfaction with the status quo was the primary motivator of the project leaders. The problems addressed by the teachers can be divided into two categories: those dealing with child-related issues and those affecting the adults who work in schools.

Issues of curriculum were a top priority for these classroom practitioners. Much like the teachers in McLaughlin's study (1988), the teachers were more interested in teaching and life in the classroom than they were "in moving vertically into quasi-administrative or expanded teaching functions or horizontally into administrative or central-office resource positions" (P. 24). As one teacher in our sample stated, "I was looking for a new way to be involved with education without leaving the classroom. It's a way to be a boss, and still be a teacher -- still be with kids."

The teacher leader whose vision had propelled her to become a teacher researcher and initiate a literacy program for young children in an inner-city school stated, "I knew that what I wanted to do had to be connected to the classroom. I had no desire to be a principal because I want to always have a strong connection to kids."

The teacher involved in integrating the sciences, arts and humanities into one interdisciplinary curriculum for seventh and eighth graders, remarked, "I'm really interested in questions of curriculum. I'm not at all interested in questions of leadership or questions of administration. I've never thought about it."

Teachers whose projects were solely focused on adults were influenced by the desire to eliminate teacher isolation and improve preservice education. As one teacher said, "the deteriorating quality of student teachers was a major impetus for my wanting to revamp traditional student teaching." Another teacher stated, "I was a cooperating teacher and I had a student teacher I didn't know what to do with, and I knew there were many other teachers in my building just like me."

The motivation to professionalize teaching was addressed by three of the teacher leaders. One of them said:

> Whenever I talk about this project at a conference or a workshop, I always say that you must provide meaningful professional development for teachers. That's the only way we'll get teachers to think about improving the way they teach the kids.

Collaboration

The importance of collaboration was highlighted by each of the participants in our study. "I built my project through collaborations and alliances," was the way one teacher phrased it.

Jean Baker Miller, in Toward a New Psychology of Women, explains this aspect of women's behavior. She writes:

> One central feature (of women's development) is that women stay with, build on, and develop in a context of connections with others. Indeed women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then maintain affiliations and relationships. (p.83)

As a first step in their leadership efforts, teachers sought sympathetic colleagues in their buildings. One suburban teacher described a colleague in her school as an important element in her success.

> I never could have done this without my 'partner in crime,' my teaching partner. When I was ready to throw in the towel, she had the energy to keep going, to consistently be a source of strength and inspiration.

From their first connections, the leaders "spread the word," convincing other teachers that it was in their own self interest to be concerned with the broader goal of school reform. Because the leadership of the teachers in our study was not positional, they *had* to attract others to their ideas, (i.e. create their own following) using interpersonal skills, hard work, and personal contacts.

This is not dissimilar from the experience of women leaders in business. Rather than "the traditional command and control style" identified with male hierarchical leadership, Judith Rosener, in a

study on the ways women lead, states that businesswomen engage in "interactive leadership" that encourages participation and facilitates inclusion (Rosener, p 120).

The teachers leaders we studied looked to parents and community members as natural allies. When asked to define her greatest source of support, one teacher responded quickly,

> My greatest support comes from the community and from the parents. In the things that have mattered a lot to me, I can rally the community behind me. I've had to do that a few times.

In another project, parents supported the teacher's initiative by contacting foundations to fund the project because they felt their children had been so well served by the project's restructuring efforts.

Noting that her work with the local arts center had been initiated by a conversation with the center's director, another teacher stated,

> I went to breakfast with the director and I asked if she thought it was possible for us to move into the now vacant space in her building. I didn't go through anybody...Because she was a friend, I wanted, from one friend to another, to know whether or not it would be a good idea.

Teachers approached colleges with their ideas. In each of the three college collaborations, teachers initiated their partnerships to redesign the clinical aspect of preservice education by increasing the role of the classroom teacher. Such collaboration also enabled teachers to pursue teacher research, curriculum development, and to participate in study groups during the school day rather than the more traditional staff development that occurs after the school day.

One of the project leaders involved in a school/college collaborative remarked:

> I used to think that teachers had all the expertise necessary to educate preservice teachers. But then I realized the importance

of a strong symbiotic relationship between higher ed and the school. The practical was not enough. Theory was essential. And theory and practice could be a powerful combination.

In one case the school principal was an ally to the teacher's reform efforts, in another the former principal served as a mentor offering advice and encouragement, but mention of the principal is notably absent from descriptions of allies and supporters. We attribute this not to a lack of interest on the part of principals, but rather to the lack of an existing paradigm for the role of the principal in teacher leadership.

Power

The school reform movement is replete with buzzwords such as "shared-decision making," "school-based management," and "the professionalization of teaching." Inherent in these concepts, but often overlooked in discussions of their implementation, is the issue of power. Power is a limited commodity in schools, and the established hierarchy places teachers in a low-power position, making it difficult for teacher leaders to be acknowledged as credible forces of change.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter, in Men and Women of the Corporation (1977) defines power as "the ability to get things done, to mobilize resources, or to get and use whatever it is that a person needs for the goal he or she is attempting to meet."

Teachers wield power in only one domain -- that of the classroom. Our survey confirms Susan Moore Johnson's analysis of the domains of decision-making in schools, in which she reports that though decisions about "classroom policy -- what to teach, how to use time, and how to assess progress" (Johnson, 1989b) are made by teachers, other important decisions that affect teachers' work, such as scheduling, class placement, assignment of specialists and the allocation of supplies are made by those at higher levels of the school's bureaucracy. Teachers are generally powerless to affect school-wide policy, and this very fact makes it difficult for leadership to emerge from among the ranks of teachers.

And, when teacher leaders do emerge and begin to affect policy and the larger domains of the school, another phenomenon occurs. The teacher must confront not only the principal, but also the ambivalence and often the resistance of teacher colleagues to the leadership of another teacher. Kanter accounts for this phenomenon by stating that when individuals experience "low opportunity", it "leads to 'passive resistance' or foot-dragging from the sidelines; a feeling of powerlessness leads to inappropriately tight control and turf-mindedness." (The Change Masters, 1983, p. 406) Thus in order to take a leadership role in the school the teacher leader must wrestle both with those above her and those equal to her in the school hierarchy.

When we asked our teacher respondents to define power, they often sidestepped the question, and remarked that the word power conjured up negative visions of authoritarian bosses. Our respondants were not alone in that perception. Dunlap and Goldman note that "Power is fundamentally domination; it carries connotations of manipulation and prohibition at best and oppression and negativity at worst" (p. 9).

When pressed, however, the teachers consistently stated that power meant the freedom to control the work they did. One teacher echoed the sentiments of many when she defined power as "decision-making, the freedom to create -- and playing hard ball." Another teacher defined power as having control over her future. There was an equating of power with control -- control over change, curriculum, budget, professional development, preservice training.

The "zero-sum" view of school leadership implies that there is only a limited amount of power in the school. If principals fear they will be relegated to becoming operational managers as a result of teachers taking on new leadership roles, then teacher leadership will not succeed. If teachers question the leadership of other teachers and wonder, "Who does she think she is?" then teacher leadership will remain a rare occurrence. But if those in schools begin to believe that power is not a "zero-sum," that power can be shared, and that by sharing power with others the quantity of power for each participant

increases, our study demonstrates that teacher leadership could actually be a powerful catalyst for the professionalization of teaching.

The issue of power has only begun to be analyzed, and more discussion of this topic is clearly necessary. Though the word is seldom articulated by teachers, the issue of power merits a long, hard look in any discussion of teacher leadership and school reform.

Issues and Barriers Confronting Teacher Leaders

The road to teacher leadership is strewn with obstacles and roadblocks. An obstacle frequently specified by the respondents is the lack of support from other teachers for their leadership efforts. This difficulty is directly related to *the egalitarian nature of teaching.*

Historically, teaching has been an "unstaged career" (Lortie, p.83) where all teachers are equal, and where the responsibilities of the first day on the job are the same as on the day of retirement. Teachers do not take on increased responsibilities consonant with their increasing skill. Therefore, teachers find it difficult to accept one of their own as a leadership figure. As one teacher leader stated, "When you work in a school and you decide on taking leadership, the reaction is, 'Who does she think she is?'"

These teachers' accounts confirmed Edson's (1987) findings that women leaders frequently encounter jealousy, competition, and lack of support from other women educators. One teacher leader attributed her greatest source of stress to "...other teachers' reluctance to change -- teachers, love 'em, hate 'em. They complain and let you do all the work!"

Two other teachers had similar comments:

> Other teachers stress me out. They're aware of their inadequacies but don't care. Teachers are so resistant to change! I think it's despicable that teachers refuse to use new curriculum even when it would be better for kids.

> When I got all these grants and I was Teacher of the Year for the state, it was hard, because the people right around you don't want to recognize your expertise... It's much easier to go

somewhere else, and tell somebody else. They think you're wonderful -- but not on your home turf.

It is ironic to note that though teacher leaders found their first allies in one or two sympathetic colleagues in their schools, once the teacher leaders began to extend their purview to larger numbers of teachers, other teaching colleagues became a source of considerable resistance.

The teacher leaders discovered the difference between *collegial and congenial relationships among teachers.* Many schools offer friendly, congenial work environments; but few offer a professional, collegial work environment that makes the school "as educative for teachers as for students" (Shulman, 1983). The teacher leaders in our sample focused on establishing collegial relationships -- relationships where mutual growth and learning are explicit goals. Despite having increased the number of their own and their peers' collegial associations, they lamented losing some of the congenial relationships they had enjoyed prior to their leadership initiatives.

As one teacher stated:

> Being a teacher leader -- it costs you! You can never be totally in with the other teachers. What it costs is, I can't be in the teachers' room. I don't belong in the same way. You give up your friends, but I say it's for a higher purpose. I see things differently. The payoff -- teachers can talk about teaching and controversial issues like tracking in a safe environment that I've created -- That's a biggy!!

Carol Gilligan uses the metaphor of a web to describe how women often feel when they differentiate themselves from other women, i.e. assume leadership in an egalitarian work setting. She describes this phenomenon as, "... [women's] wish to be at the center of connection and the consequent fear of being too far out on the edge" (p. 62).

Another teacher reiterated the effect of this loss of connection. "I feel more isolated from the rest of the school. As more energy goes into the project, less energy goes to the rest of the school. I feel less in touch."

These words also echo Philip Jackson's in his article, "Lonely at the Top: Observations on the Genesis of Administrative Isolation." Jackson contends, "the person in charge of an organization...is somewhat more vulnerable to feelings of being alone...." Though these teacher leaders are not "in charge of an organization," nor do they aspire to be principals, they, too, are confronted by "the forces that threaten to encapsulate... administrators, surrounding (them) with a shell that separates (them) from others in the organization that (they) serve" (Jackson, p. 14, 1976) and are isolated from their colleagues.

Each of the teacher leaders we interviewed worked in a school with a male principal, and a number of the teachers blamed *administration* for the difficulties they encountered as teacher leaders. As one subject stated:

> Support isn't there from administration. They don't recognize the importance of making teaching the best it can be. There are objective standards that aren't adhered to. My principal called my efforts 'cute.' Cute doesn't describe serious-minded people.

Another echoed these sentiments when she described her efforts to implement substantive school change.

> It's about decision-making. Playing hard ball. Letting people know you're serious. My principal said to me, "Why don't you tend to your knitting?" and "Don't you ever stay home with your kids?" I took it as a way to push me back, a way to keep me in my place. The hierarchy is male in education.

Only in one instance were parents considered an obstacle to the teacher leader's reform efforts. This teacher remarked that *parents* in her inner-city school were not supportive of the changes she had brought to reading and writing. As she reported:

> I work with the urban poor. Within that framework parents don't see that change is inevitable. They hold on to what they think is good education - even if it's not good for their child in this time.

Another set of obstacles related to *time* and institutional *structure*. The difficulty of juggling leadership and classroom responsibilities was sometimes overwhelming.

One teacher remarked:

> I think the biggest obstacle is the time factor -- that if you're really seriously doing your job, it's very time consuming. It's hard to take a lot of time out to talk with other people and be out of your classroom...keep growing and working ...out giving workshops and that kind of thing. I think that time is really the hardest factor, at least initially.

Calling "time" the biggest source of stress, another teacher remarked:

> It's time -- keeping on top of my classroom and doing the other work of seeing that things get done. Another source of stress has been that I've had to learn to slow myself down in order to get other people on board.

Teacher Leadership as a Vehicle for Professional Growth

Though professional growth was not the primary goal of any of the projects we studied, sophisticated professional development was accomplished by all the teacher leaders in their projects. Professional development for these teacher leaders, and the many teachers whose work they affected, no longer occurred at afternoon workshops mandated by central office and tolerated by teachers. It was an outgrowth of the work that teachers did together. These collaborative ventures reflect current feminist theory that the most substantive growth occurs in conjunction with others to whom we feel connected and for whom we care.

Teachers felt their projects had stimulated and deepened their conversations about teaching; improved classroom teaching was the result.

> This project has made me more aware of my teaching. I want to be the best I can be. It makes me want to try new things, and find out if I can do them. I'm not boring. I've added a new dimension to my teaching.

> Teachers who research the classroom can learn to teach better. Looking beyond the immediacy of the moment and reflecting back enables me to be a more effective teacher.

In addition, these teachers acquired skills not generally thought of as essential to successful teaching. They learned to communicate more effectively with other adults, to build coalitions, listen to peers, work behind the scenes to achieve their goals, develop strategies for innovation and change. They spoke passionately and in detail about having become more politically savvy.

> I know how to present now (at college classes and conferences), to speak to different audiences. People appreciate my knowledge and my honesty. I talk about the real issues in education.

Another teacher noted,

> Working with student teachers has made me more cognizant about what and how I teach. I really think about integrating theory and practice.

Teachers were more self confident, both professionally and personally, as a result of the new roles they had created for themselves.

> I feel better about myself. I can now say with conviction to other people that I'm doing something that's educationally and pedagogically sound. It's not just a frill. I feel much more professional.

Clearly, our interviews with teacher leaders confirm Roland Barth's comment in Run School Run, "Staff development...is most

fruitful when it is an incidental outcome of other school functions thoughtfully undertaken" (1980, p. 147).

Conclusion

The Carnegie Report states that "the key" to the successful reform of schools "lies in creating a profession...of well-educated teachers prepared to assume new powers and responsibilities to redesign schools for the future" (p. 2). Our study demonstrates that such teachers already exist, and it is likely that their ranks could be increased if the structure and the culture of the school allowed teacher leadership to flourish.

The teachers we studied succeeded *despite* the structure of the schools in which they worked. Despite administrators who cautioned them or thought they were "cute," despite other teachers who questioned their right to take authority, and despite the bureaucratic structure which placed them in a low-power position, these teachers prevailed.

Teacher leaders are primarily interested in the improvement of teaching and curriculum for children. Their leadership interests come second. Each had a vision of how she thought her school should change. That vision was meant to directly meet her needs, the needs of the children she taught, and then to affect other teachers and children.

Relationships and feelings of connectedness, so important among women, changed when these women took leadership. Though many of their colleagues saw them as important figures in the school, others viewed these teachers as threats. Why does connectedness change when female teachers takes leadership? Can female teachers maintain relationships with other women when they are in a power position? How can we redefine power and leadership in feminist terms? This is indeed fertile ground for further investigation.

Most studies of teacher leadership have focused on teachers' leadership role in mentoring and peer coaching -- more common examples of the way women lead. Women's propensity to devote

themselves to the care and empowerment of others has been amply documented by Miller, Gilligan and others.

Our study demonstrates that teacher leaders can assume leadership in a larger arena-- the arena of school reform -- and it also indicates the difficulties and obstacles that teachers can expect to encounter when they choose to undertake such leadership activities. This study encourages us to expand our vision of what teacher leadership could include. The teacher leaders we interviewed struggled, and to a large extent succeeded, in claiming new territories of teacher leadership in school reform.

Education cannot afford to ignore the talents of teachers with vision and leadership potential, who are ready, willing and able to assume leadership roles. Policymakers, boards of education, administrators, and unions should aggressively seek out teachers with expert leadership qualities so that schools can more effectively educate our children, the key to America's future.

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